

This book critically engages the reasons for differences in Evangelical Theology concerning the Person of Christ.

**COMPREHENDING CHRIST:
A THEOLOGY OF HOW AND WHY
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANs DISAGREE
ABOUT THE PERSON OF CHRIST**
by Bill Grover, D. Th.

Order the complete book from the publisher
[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10168.html?s=pdf>
or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.

The background of the cover is a soft, golden-hued landscape. On the left, a person is shown in silhouette, standing on a slight rise and holding a long, thin staff or pole. The person's face is not visible, and they appear to be looking towards the right. The background is filled with the silhouettes of trees and a bright, hazy light source, likely the sun, which creates a strong glow and lens flare effect. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Comprehending CHRIST

Comprehending Christ:
*A Theology of How and Why
Christian Theologians Disagree About
Christ's Person.*

Bill Grover, D. Th.

Copyright © 2019 Bill Grover, D. Th.

ISBN: 978-1-64438-286-8

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2019

First Edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: CHRIST IN THE TRINITY	5
1. Does the name ‘Son of God’ indicate an eternal role subordination?.....	5
2. Is belief in the eternal role subordination of the Son a denial of Homoousios (oneness of nature)?.....	7
3. Are there three faculties of will in God?	9
4. Are Trinal relationships in the economic Trinity (God acting in creation) those in the immanent Trinity (God in himself)?	11
5. Are operations of the Trinity inseparable?	13
6. Is the Covenant of Redemption Biblical?.....	15
7. If Christ is eternally begotten, must that require him to be eternally role subordinate?.....	17
8. As Christ was sent by the Father, does that require Christ to be eternally role subordinate to the Father?	19
9. As it is the Father who predestines, does that mean that the Son is eternally role subordinate?	21
10. As the Father created through the Son, is the Son subject to the Father?	

11. As the Son is at the right hand of power or at the right hand of God, does that mean that the Son is of a lower rank in authority?23

CHAPTER THREE: CHRIST IN SUBORDINATE

SCRIPTURE.....25

12. John 5:18,19.. The Son can do only what he sees the Father doing.25

13. John 6:38, Christ came from Heaven to do the Father's will.27

14. John 14:28. The Father is greater than the Son.....29

15. 1 Corinthians 11:3. God is the authority over Christ.

16. 1 Corinthians 15:28. The Son will be subject to God.32

17. Galatians 4:4,5. When the right time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman to redeem sinners.36

18. Ephesians 1:3-5. The Father chose us in Christ before creation and he predestined us.37

19. Philippians 2:6. While in God's nature, Christ did not grasp at being God's equal.39

20. Hebrews 5:8,9. Even though he is God's Son, by suffering he learned to obey, and he became the source of our salvation.....42

CHAPER FOUR: CHRIST IN HISTORICAL

THEOLOGY 45

21. Do the Nicene experts, Athanasius and Hilary, teach the eternal role subordination of Christ?..... 45

22. Is Cyril of Alexandria correct that Christ does not act distinctly and differently through his two natures? 48

23. Does Nestorius teach that Christ is two persons? 51

24. Is Chalcedon’s two nature doctrine congruent with functional kenoticism? 55

25. Does Constantinople (680-681) err in requiring the belief of two wills in Christ? 58

26. Should Leonitius of Byzantium’s doctrine of enhypostasia (divine nature personalized humanity) be rejected? 60

27. Does Augustine or Calvin teach the eternal role subordination of the Son? 62

28. Does Warfield or Charles Hodge teach the eternal role subordination of the Son? 65

29. Is Hodge correct that Christ could have sinned but did not?

30. Is the Reformed view on the communication of attributes in Christ to be preferred over the Lutheran? 70

CHAPTER FIVE: CHRIST IN FUNCTIONAL

KENOTICISM73

- 31. Can God change or give up the use of his divine attributes?73
- 32. Does teaching that Christ gave up some divine powers to incarnate, best prevent ascribing to Christ a split personality?77
- 33. Is functional kenoticism’s unifying Christ a tendency toward Monophysitism (one nature)?.....79
- 34. Can Christ possess both divine omni attributes and human attributes?81
- 35. Was the Son , in his Divine nature, ignorant of some things while on earth?83
- 36. Was Christ’s divine nature confined in a body?86
- 37. Did Christ’s divine nature suffer?.....87
- 38. Does Philippians 2:7 teach that as God Christ gave up any attribute or the use of one?88
- 39. Did Christ’s exaltation restore Christ’s use of divine attributes?89
- 40. Is God limiting himself in creation and providence corollary to Christ emptying himself?.....91
- 41. Is Kryptic (I know is also spelled with a ‘C’ !) Christology a better option than Kenotic Christology?92

WORKS CITED95

CHAPTER THREE: CHRIST IN SUBORDINATE SCRIPTURE

The question for each of these eight Scriptures is whether or not the eternal role subordination of the Son to the Father is clearly taught in the text.

12. John 5:18, 19. The Son can do only what he sees the Father doing.

There are three understandings on the implications of this text. The first is that the Son as God lacks the power to do anything on his own because he is subordinate to the Father. The second is that neither the Son as God nor the Father can act in separation from the other because they are of one nature. The third is that the referent is not the divine nature but Christ incarnate.

YES.

Keener and Cowan represent the first view. Keener is of the opinion that Christ in this text does not claim equality with God; instead Jesus is saying that he acts in obedience and only with delegated authority. (Subordination Within the Trinity, 42, 44) And Cowan asserts that this verse means that not only is the Son dependent on his Father, but he also demonstrated total obedience. (The Father and the Son in the Gospel of John, 51)

NO.

The second view has Westcott, Beasley-Murray, and Augustine as representatives. Westcott states that the essential unity between the Father and the Son makes it impossible for any self-determined action on the part of the Son. (The Gospel According to John, 89) Were that correct, then the text is not dealing with subordination between the divine persons at all but instead a simplicity within the divine nature. (see **5**) Beasley-Murray proposes that “when the first clause is taken in conjunction with the second, it is recognized as an assertion of identity of action of the Son and the Father.” (John in WBC, no 36, 75) Augustine concurs with that understanding saying of this text that, “the working of the Father and the Son is indivisible.” (On the Trinity, 2.1.3)

The third view is represented by Calvin. Calvin states that John 5:19 only refers to the Son of God as he was manifested in the flesh. (Commentaries XVII, 198) This understanding clearly is contrary to the opinion that the text informs that the Son prior to the incarnation, and in his divine nature apart from his humanity, was obedient to the Father. But as others contend that acts of the incarnate Christ cannot be exclusive to one nature alone, (Dahms, Subordination of the Son, 353; Erickson Christian Theology, 670). Can the conclusion be drawn that only in his humanity Christ is subordinate? (see **21**)

13. John 6:38, Christ came from Heaven to do the Father's will.

YES.

It seems that John 6:38 is thought to pose a strenuous challenge to those who reject the eternal role subordination of the Son. Its popularity among those who espouse the eternal relational subordination of the Son is indicated in an anthology devoted to demonstrating this tenet which has five different contributors discussing this same verse (One God in Three Persons). Elsewhere, Ware who co edits that book asserts that the words in John 6:38 could not express more clearly that the obedience to the will of the Father took place in eternity past as the pre-incarnate Son came from heaven at the will of the Father. (Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles, 23)

NO.

But Ware's opinion conflicts with the views of those who say that there is only one will in God and that the acts of God are inseparable, (see **3, 5**). Both issues are reflected in Chrysostom's thoughts on the text as this father explains the meaning to be that Christ has no will different than that of the Father because the Son and the Father have all things in common. (Homilies on the Gospel of John, XLV) And Gregory of Nazianzus argues for the same regarding this very text: as there is one divinity, there is only one will in God. (Fourth Theological Oration, 12) To these excellent church

fathers John 6:38 does not teach the eternal role subordination of the Son.

Chemnitz, the 16th century Lutheran Christologist, however, understands the ‘my will’ in John 6:38 as an allusion to a faculty in Christ’s humanity --not in the divine will-- which resides in human nature of Christ. Chemnitz teaches that wills inhere in natures not in persons. (*The Two Natures in Christ*, 59, 235, 236) Under that interpretation, John 6:38 is not evidence of the eternal subordination of the Son.

The above comments have summarized two understandings of “will” mentioned in John 6:38 which do not require that the Son is said to yield his will to that of the Father’s prior to the Incarnation. These views are expressed by three respected interpreters of Scripture. Whether these three are correct or not, I do not see how one can do otherwise than believing that Ware has overstated his case when he insists that John 6:38 “could not express more clearly that the obedience to the will of the Father took place in eternity past” and therefore Christ, as God, eternally submits his will to the Father’s will.

Doing theology well is difficult; it opens many opportunities for making mistakes. Should one believe that any who disagrees with him or her is incompetent? Or should one neglect to even mention those who disagree with him or her and not instead fairly state and effectively counter their objections?

14. John 14:28. The Father is greater than the Son.

YES.

Kitano is quite convinced that “this text clearly teaches the eternal relational subordination of the Son. (The Eternal Subordination of the Son, 99) Dahms would agree, saying that the statement must concern Christ’s essential being (Subordination of the Son, 358. Keener, while stipulating that the meaning is not that Father is greater than the Son in nature, contends that it does say that the Father is “greater in position, and that the Son submits to His will. (Subordination Within the Trinity 41, 42)

NO.

Some modern theologians, exegetes, historians, and ancients too understand the text to be confined to Christ incarnate. Buswell asserts that Christ’s words are applicable only to “the days in his flesh. (A Systematic Theology, 1:106) And Morris points out that the context is that the *human* Jesus is departing from the earth. (my italics) (Gospel of John in NICNT, 659) Schaff too believes that the referent is Christ in the state of his humiliation. (History of the Christian Church III:683) In patristics, Athanasius seems in a minority in understanding the text to mean that the Father is greater not in “greatness” but because he begets the Son. (Four Discourses Against the Arians 1.13.8)

Other fathers as Augustine, Leo, Hilary, Theodoret, and Ambrose all understand that it is only in Christ's humanity that the Father is greater. Gregory Nazianzus further attributes ignorance and arrogance to those who ascribe John 14:28 and other similar Scriptures to the divinity of Christ instead of seeing that such refer to Christ's human nature only. (Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 6.10.9; Leo, *Sermon 78.5*; Hilary *On the Trinity*, 9.2.3; Theodoret, *Dialogues*, *Testimony of Amphilochius*, Ambrose, *On the Christian Faith*, 2.8; Gregory Nazianzus, *Third Theological Oration* 18)

Q15. 1 Corinthians 11:3. God is the authority over Christ.

As we pass from John into Paul, disagreement over whether the New Testament predicates the eternal role subordination of the Son to the Father is not abated.

YES.

One would err to derive from Erickson's discussion on George Knight (*Who's Tampering*, 33-36) that in 1977 Knight was first to introduce the view that 1 Corinthians 11:3 means that the Son as God is role subordinate the Father. For 111 years before that, Godet writes that this text cannot apply only to Christ incarnate but that subordination applies to "the Divine being of Christ" as well. (*Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, Vol. 2, 111) Ware too says that the text does not limit the Father's headship to the

humanity of Christ only. (Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles, 22)

In Kitano's view, this text is one of the strongest to teach the eternal subordination of the Son. (Eternal Relational Subordination, 102) And Grudem, Kitano's thesis supervisor, by the way, makes the text significant to his view on gender relationships-- that equality in nature does not mandate equality in roles-- by teaching that while the Father and Son are equal in nature, they are not equal in role. The text teaches, says Grudem, that the Father has the greater authority though the two are equal in deity. (Systematic Theology, 459)

NO

However, two counters to the view above often have been made. First some have asserted as Bilezikien (Bungee Jumping, 61) and Erickson (Christian Theology, 307) that *kephale* (head) mean "source of" not authority over. But, Grudem's forty-three page rebuttal of Richard Cervin, in my opinion, lays a heavy burden of proof on those who deny that 'head' in 1 Corinthians 11:3 does not mean authority over." (Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 552-559) But a counter to Kitano's view is proffered by Chemnitz who understands "Christ" in this text to refer only to his human nature. (The Two Natures in Christ, 275)

Those who have read Chemnitz know that the reformer tends to establish his understanding on the ancients. While Chemnitz here does not cite from

patristics to evidence his interpretation, a casual search will reveal that some fathers also hold that “Christ” in this text refers only to the human nature. (Augustine, On Faith and the Creeds, 9.18; Ambrose Of the Christian Faith 4.3:31-33; Cyril of Alexandria, Epistle to Nestorius with the 12 Anathemas) Perhaps it should be researched as to whether ‘Christ ’in the New Testament ever clearly has only the humanity as its referent and whether the immediate context provides any clues on the issue. Such activity might tip the judgment toward one or the other opinion.

But it is said that Christ was born, (Luke 2:11), died (1 Peter 1:2), and was resurrected. (Acts 2:31) These would seem to indicate that the term “Christ” can -not must-refer only to the humanity-not the deity. But that the text only references the incarnated Christ not the pre incarnate Christ is the opinion of some commentators as Groscheide (The First Epistle to the Corinthians in NICNT, 251) and Hodge. (1 and 2 Corinthians, 207) Were these correct, then the text would not evidence the eternal role subordination of the Son.

16. 1 Corinthians 15:28. The Son will be subject to God.

YES.

Kovach and Shemm aver that this text demonstrates the unchallenged reign of God the Father *alone*. (my italics A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son, 472) But issue remains, as it

was in 11:3, whether the referent is the divinity or the humanity or both natures in Christ. Dahms sees no good reason not to make this verse refer to the Son's "essential being." (*The Subordination of the Son*, 358)

And Hamilton too does not envision Paul here distinguishing between the incarnate and the divine Logos. (*That God May Be All in All*, 108) Godet interprets the text as a reference to an "essential relationship of the Son to the Father in both divine and human existence." (*First Corinthians*, 371) And Kitano insists that this text "makes it impossible to conclude that the Son's subordination was limited to the incarnation." (*Eternal Relational Subordination of the Son*, 107)

But despite Hamilton's vision, McCall points out that 1 Corinthians 15:28 cannot imply an eternal hierarchy within the Trinity because the condition described is future and so cannot be read back into eternity past. (*Which Trinity*, 185) Charles Hodge deems it that "the Son" here is not "predicated of the eternal Logos" but of the "Logos as incarnate." (*1 and 2 Corinthians*, 333) Frame also believes that Paul means that Christ as man will subject himself to the headship of God. (*The Doctrine of God*, 683); that view also is Calvin's. (*Commentaries XX.30*)

That Christ's humanity is Paul's referent in 1 Corinthians is also the opinion of several patristic exegetes. Ambrose distinguishes between Son of man and Son of God saying that in the former in his subjection "under the conditions of the flesh," Christ

delivered up the kingdom to the Father. Ambrose is emphatic that since the Father and the Son are of the same nature, so, therefore, the subjection of the Son to Father occurs only in the “assumed humanity.” (Of the Christian Faith 5.14, 171, 174) Hilary explains the text as meaning that Christ as man has ascended to receive his glory as man our representative. (On the Trinity, 1:33) And Augustine, who in the same part, three times states that Christ as God is equal to the Father, and affirms that it is as a creature that the Son will deliver up the kingdom to God. (On the Trinity, 1.13.28)

Such references to highly respected interpreters of the Faith may suggest to some that Kitano’s bravado in asserting that 1 Corinthians 15:28 “makes it *impossible* (my italics) to conclude that the Son’s subordination was limited to the Incarnation” was immodest. Impossible? Frame, Hodge, Calvin, Augustine, Ambrose, and Hilary all are guilty of advancing an “impossible” interpretation? Really?

One may be surprised that that comment in the TEDS Th.M.-- and note the Th.M.in the USA is a high masters normally requiring a BA, and three year M Div in preparation, the latter which includes Hebrew and Greek plus a minimum of another year of coursework and a thesis—was passed by Grudem without any requirement to tone down the presumption a bit given the contrary and well-established opinions in the two above paragraphs. But, passing that thesis with such a

conclusion on 1 Corinthians 15:28 evidences the need for such a book as this.

Yet while citing authorities has its place, it is the Scripture, itself, which is authoritative. Therefore, contextual clues in the present passage need to be weighed. In verse 12 Christ is said to be raised from the dead. In verse 21 Christ is stated to be “a man.” Why should it be assumed that the referent in verse 28 is the divine nature since ‘Son’ also can reference experiences in Christ’s humanity? (eg, Luke 1:32; Acts 3:26; Romans 5:10)

Another issue in understanding this text concerns the duration of Christ’s reign in other Scriptures needs to be factored into the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:28 to determine if the Bible establishes eternity as an attribute of Christ’s Kingdom. If it does, how should that issue interface with the understanding of this Scripture? But Scripture states that that the rule of Christ and his kingdom is eternal. (Psalm 45:6; Luke 1:33; 2 Peter 1:11) Might it be that 1 Corinthians 15:28 means that Christ as man is giving up the Kingdom to the Trinity? (Calvin and Frame above) Why must “God” in verse 28 mean only the Father?

Eventually in this research the difficulty of how the two natures in Christ relate must be broached. Starke identifies the problem clearly by asking whether a correct understanding of the incarnational obedience of the Son can withstand a separation between the activity of the eternal Word and the assumed humanity. (Augustine and

His interpreters, 166) That problem will be reviewed in **21.**

17. Galatians 4:4, 5. When the right time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman to redeem sinners.

YES.

Grudem seemingly has a solid basis for criticizing Belleville for suggesting that ‘God’, not the Father, sent the Son into the world. (‘Son’ Christology in the New Testament, 68) Grudem reminds his readers of a number of Scriptures which declare that Christ is the Son of the Father. (Doctrinal Deviations, 34) Grudem’s view that it was the Father, distinctly, who sent the preexistent Son is in accord with both Calvin and Augustine. (Calvin, Commentaries XXI.18; Augustine On the Trinity 1.11.22)

But the question should not be whether the eternal Son was sent by the Father, the question rather is was that sending the result of an obedient submission on the part of God the Son to the supreme authority of the Father? And that is a complex issue. As noted in **8**, Cowan, among others, argues that sendings in John indicate that the one who is sent is under the authority of the one who sends. And Christ repeatedly as in 5:23 and 12:44, states it was the Father who sent him. Further, in 13:16 Jesus establishes the principle that one sent is not greater than the one who sends him. So is Galatians 4:4 uncontroverted evidence that Christ as God is subject to the Father?

NO

It is not according to Augustine who in commenting on this very text confesses that “He was not sent in respect to any inequality of power, or substance or *anything* that in him was not equal to the Father... (he was sent because)... he is a pure emanation issuing from the glory of the Almighty God.” (my italics-On the Trinity 4.20.27) Is this understanding not in accord with John 1:18 wherein Christ who is God, has the mode of operation of making God the Father known?

And Warfield finds cause to base the roles or modes of operation of the Triune persons not in a difference in authority but in the Covenant of Redemption. (Biblical Doctrines, 166, 167) So, here are two esteemed Christologists who deny that the Father sending the Son must mean that the Son is role subordinate.

18. Ephesians 1:3-5. The Father chose us in Christ before creation and he predestined us.

YES

Grudem lists a number of other texts which show that God predestined us before the world’s creation, in Christ: Romans 8:29; Ephesians 3:9-11; 2 Timothy 1:9; and 1 Peter 1:19, 20; and Revelation 13:8. To Grudem’s list, we might add Luke 22:22 and Acts 2:32 and 4:28. So, certainly Scripture affirms, as Revelation 13:8 has it, the Lamb was slain from the creation of the world.

Grudem concludes that these Scriptures “indicate that prior to creation the Son was eternally subject to the planning and authority of the Father...” (Biblical Evidence for the Eternal Submission of the Son, 234)

NO

But if the sacrifice of the Son as God is to be included in the divine decree, and that sending is concerned with an eternal relationship of submission-authority between the Father and the Son, then some may raise an objection to that. That is because it is understood by a number of theologians that no relationship in God is predestined:

*Berkhof explains that nothing in the divine decree pertains to anything in the essential being of God; nothing in the inner being of God is decreed. (Systematic Theology, 103)

*Shedd, teaches that no necessary activity of God pertaining to Trinitarian distinctions can be part of the decree. (Dogmatic Theology I.395, 396)

*Strong stipulates that God’s decree has reference only to things outside of God. (Systematic Theology, 353)

*Klooster asserts that the necessary acts of God are excluded from the divine decree. (Decrees of God, 303)

*Chafer writes, “God did not however decree... any inherent relationship or assumption of responsibility

within the Godhead. (Systematic Theology, unabridged, I.228)

Now Grudem is a systematic theologian. As such he surely is aware that a number of his peers have denied that any eternal relationship in God is predestined. Yet Grudem fails to even acknowledge that such views exist among evangelicals, much less effectively counter them. In my opinion, the predestination of Christ's obedience instead of being a viable argument for the Son's eternal relational subordination rather is solid evidence that the Son's role obedience is not an eternal relationship in God.

19. Philippians 2:6. While in God's nature, Christ did not grasp at being God's equal.

YES.

Burk contends that the Son as God is eternally role subordinate to the Father and argues that 'form of God' and 'equality with God' are not semantic equivalents. The articular infinitive "*the* to be equal" is not a grammatical basis to make equality with God anaphoric (taking meaning from) to *morphe theou* (form of God). Burk asserts that the article functions rather to mark the components of the double accusative. So equality in the text is not attributed to Christ, Burk states. (Christ's Functional Subordination in Philippians 2:6, 82-107)

Others in the same anthology, who concur with Burk's view on the Son's subjection, however, disagree

with him that ‘equality with God’ is not predicated to the Son. They say that equality means identified with YHWH not equal in authority with the Father. (Bird and Shillaker, *Subordination in the Trinity and Gender Roles*, 299)

This understanding of ‘equality with God’ is also that of Grudem’s who opines that “The equality this passage talks about is equality in honor and glory in heaven... it does not say that the Son was not obedient.” (*Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 409) Both of these interpretations of Philippians 2:6 require a response. These three disagree with Burk in that they posit the equality in Philippians of some sort in Christ but Burk does not. This suggests that the text is more debatable than Burk seems to understand.

NO.

In fact, in contrast to Burk, Erickson and Calvin express the opinion that equality with God is predicated to the Son in Philippians 2:6. (Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh*, 477; Calvin *Commentaries XXI.58*) A number of well-recognized modern exegetes also hold views contrary to Burk’s exegesis in that they connect ‘equality with God’ to ‘form of God.’ (Feinberg, *The Kenosis and Christology*, 31; Hawthorne, *Philippians in WBC*, 84; Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, 111, 112; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 111) For example, Fee writes that it is clear that Paul intends his meaning that to be that being in God’s form means being equal with God. (*Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 207) I suppose that

some of these named are just as competent in Greek exegesis as Burk. Though, like Burk, none have Greek as their native tongue. However, some early church fathers did.

What perhaps should be informative in weighing the validity of Burk's newly discovered grammaticism is to inquire as to whether Greek speaking fathers of the early Church grasped the meaning of the text in the same manner Burk understands it. Could those esteemed fathers who had Greek as their first tongue not be expected to be informed on the meaning of their own language? Yet Chrysostom understands that the text means that because Christ has God's nature, he, therefore, has "this equality with God." (Homilies on Philippians, 7) Athanasius too posits equality with God in Christ on account of this very text. (De Synodis, 49; De Sententia, 10) And Leo, while not citing the text echoes it, stipulates that in his Godhead Christ is equal to the Father. (Letter 28.4)

Regarding the view that equality (*Isos*) with God does not include having authority with God, first, both Stahlin (*Isos* in TDNT III:353) and Beyreuther (*Isos* in DNTT 2:500) include an 'equality of will' in the meaning of *isos* in Philippians 2:6. Second, the expected contrast of Christ as an obedient servant to the Father in 2:7, 8 would not be Christ as obedient servant to the Father in 2:6. The contrast would be Christ as sovereign Lord. And, third, Grudem's apparent attempt (Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth, 409) to imply

that because Philippians 2:8 does not specify that Christ ever stopped being obedient, therefore he must have been always obedient is a *non sequitur*; the text does not state that. And theology is better built on what the Bible does actually do say rather than what it does not say.

20. Hebrews 5:8, 9. Even though he is God's Son, by suffering he learned to obey, and he became the source of our salvation.

At issue is whether the obedience occurred in the Son's deity or in his humanity.

YES.

Grudem uses the previous references in Hebrews to the Son as involved in creation (1:2), the Son being God on the throne (1:8), and the Son being the express image of God (1:3) as evidence that Hebrews in 5:8 has the Son as God as its referent not the Son as man. (Biblical Evidence, 241) And using these seems very appropriate.

NO.

However, Jowers disagrees believing that 'Son' here has Christ's humanity in mind because the Son here is said to learn obedience. Jowers also cites Gregory Nazianzus who states that as the Logos, Christ was neither obedient nor disobedient for such terms are for servants. (The Inconceivability of Subordination, 401)

While Grudem does rightly to use the context of Hebrews to find texts indicating that the Son of God

COMPREHENDING CHRIST

refers to Christ's divinity, the fact is that in Hebrews the title also signifies Christ in his humanity: The Son of God is crucified, 6:6. The Son of God has blood. (10:29) And the immediate context of 5:8 indicates that in obedience Christ was perfected. (5:9) How is the Son as God, 'perfected'?

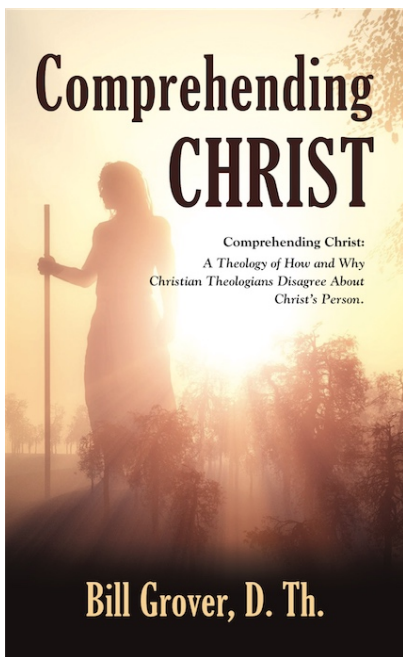
Further, the exegetes Ellingworth (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* in NIGTC, 293) and Hughes (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*) concur that it was as man that the Son learned to obey. Were that true, this text would seem to support the opinion that it was only in his human nature that the Son of God obeyed the Father.

Further, note the contextual clue: Christ learned obedience by suffering! Yet House and Geisler insist that God cannot undergo suffering. (*The Battle for God*, 170) The same is asserted by Calvin, "God...suffers not." (*Institutes* 2.14.2) And that divine impassibility is the logic that Hodge expresses in insisting that "the suffering of Christ was not the suffering of the divine nature." (*Systematic Theology* II.395) But think about this: if the learning of obedience by Christ were attained by suffering, which suffering God cannot experience, how is that obedience an act of Christ's deity?

Further, House and Geisler have it that God's knowledge is infinite (*The Battle for God*, 21) Grudem believes that God knows everything from eternity. (*Systematic Theology*, 190) And Lewis and Demarest teach that God is omniscient having an unlimited knowledge. (*Integrative Theology*, 1:23) But does that

mean the learning in Hebrews 5:8 cannot be that of the divine nature of Christ?

Yes, it could if one thought that the deity of Christ incarnate ceased being omniscient, but I don't see Grudem, Geisler or House teaching that. Lewis and Demerest may be understood as being a bit confusing on the issue given their comment on the divine intelligence being "sublimated" (2:344) if by that a change is meant. I would agree that the human intellect did not know all the divine intellect did. But in my opinion, and I think in Calvin's too (Institutes 2.14.2), the Incarnation did not change the understanding of the Logos in any manner. If Christ is God having God's omniscience, then how can Christ as God learn? It seems to me, the learning could only be in his humanity, and, if so, so was the obedience only in his human nature.



This book critically engages the reasons for differences in Evangelical Theology concerning the Person of Christ.

**COMPREHENDING CHRIST:
A THEOLOGY OF HOW AND WHY
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANs DISAGREE
ABOUT THE PERSON OF CHRIST**
by Bill Grover, D. Th.

Order the complete book from the publisher
[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10168.html?s=pdf>
or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.